

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8065

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 02051

STATE PLEASE PASS JUSTICE, MR. TERRENCE ADAMSON

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP

SUBJECT: ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL VISIT

1. WE OFFER SOME FACTS AND VIEWS ON WHY CAREFULLY LAID PLANS FOR THE VISIT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL AND HIS PARTY WENT AWRY AND SUFFERED AN ELEVENTH-HOUR POSTPONE-MENT.

2. HAD ATTORNEY GENERAL OSCAR FLORES NOT FALLEN ILL THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 26, WITH WHAT HIS FAMILY AND STAFF FIRST THOUGHT WAS A CARDIAC INFARCTION, THE VISIT WOULD HAVE GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN. (WE ARE AUTHORITATIVELY TOLD THAT FLORES' CONDITION IS NOW DIAGNOSED AS A HERNIATED DIAPHRAGM, AND THAT HE WILL SPEND TWO TO THREE MORE WEEKS IN THE HOSPITAL BEFORE BEGINNING TO RESUME HIS ACTIVITIES. SOURCES NOT IN HIS OFFICE REPORT THAT HE DID INDEED SUFFER A CARDIAC ATTACK.)

3. FLORES SAW AND STILL SEES THE VISIT OF AG BELL AND HIS PARTY AS IN HIS PROVINCE. ON FEB 2 FERNANDO BAEZA, CONFIDENTIAL

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HIS EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TOLD THE AMBASSADOR AT FLORES' DIRECTION THAT PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO DID NOT WISH THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S CHIEF LEGAL ADVISER TO GO AHEAD UNLESS FLORES AS JLP'S CHIEF ADVISER ON ALL LEGAL QUESTIONS COULD RECEIVE HIM AND DIRECT THE PROGRAM OF TALKS. FOREIGN SECRETARY ROEL QUOTED THE PRESIDENT AS HOLDING A SIMILAR VIEW WHEN HE TELEPHONED AMBASSADOR

LUCEY FROM LOS PINOS THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 31. (SEE MEXICO 01788.)

4. WHILE THE CENTRALITY OF FLORES IN THE VISIT PREVAILED AMONG FLORES' STAFF AND, IT SEEMS, WITH THE PRESIDENT, IT NEEDS EVALUATION FROM SEVERAL POINTS OF VIEW. EMBASSY DISCUSSIONS OF THE VISIT, INCLUDING ITS TIMING, TOOK PLACE INITIALLY WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY ROEL. IT WAS ONLY AFTER HE RECALLED A COMMITMENT TO ACCOMPANY MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS TO THE ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES OF THE YUCATAN THAT AG FLORES WAS ASKED TO BE HOST. (WE WERE TOLD THAT THE DESIGNATION OF FLORES AS HOST WAS APPROVED BY A FORMAL PRESIDENTIAL MANDATE. THIS FACT PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE CRIPPLING DELAY IN NAMING AN ALTERNATE HOST WHEN FLORES WAS STRICKEN.)

5. FROM BEGINNING, USG SAW PRIMARY PURPOSE OF AG BELL GROUP VISIT AS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS PROBLEM AND TO ASSIST ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL, SECRETARY OF LABOR MARSHALL, CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND OTHERS TO FORMULATE VIEWS ON LEGISLATION NOW BEFORE CONGRESS. WE EXPRESSED THIS PRIMACY TO ATTORNEY GENERAL FLORES AND TO SECRETARIAT OF LABOR, LISTING NARCOTICS COOPERATION, PRISONER TRANSFER, AND EXTRADITION AS OTHER TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED. ALTHOUGH FLORES' STAFF SPEAKS AS IF HE WERE CLOSELY INVOLVED IN ALL THESE PROBLEMS, IT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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LEMS, SINCE THEY HAVE A LEGAL ASPECT TO THEM, THE FACT IS THAT THE AG'S MANDATE HAS NOT IN PAST INCLUDED MEXICAN UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS IN THE UNITED STATES IN MORE THAN A PERIPHERAL WAY. FOR INSTANCE, WHEN THE NIMETZ-HANSELL TEAM BRIEFED THE GOM HERE IN EARLY JULY ON THE CARTER PROGRAM AND WHEN THE SOCIAL WORKING GROUP MET ON AUGUST 11-12, NO REPRESENTATIVES OF AG FLORES' STAFF PARTICIPATED IN THE DISCUSSION OF UNDOCUMENTEDS. THUS, THERE EXISTED FROM THE BEGINNING AN AMBIGUITY BETWEEN SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND INTEREST, CENTERED IN FOREIGN RELATIONS AND LABOR, AND OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE VISIT, WHICH ROEL AGREED TO PLACE IN FLORES' HANDS IN ORDER TO CLEAR HIS OWN WAY FOR THE TRIP TO THE YUCATAN.

6. WITH FLORES' ILLNESS, THINGS FELL APART. HIS STAFF FELT THAT THE VISIT SHOULD BE POSTPONED, BUT PROBABLY OUT OF POLITENESS SAID IT WOULD LEAVE THE OPTION TO US. AS A CONSEQUENCE, WE OPERATED FROM LATE FRIDAY JANUARY 27 UNTIL LATE TUESDAY JANUARY 31 WITH ONLY THE VAGUEST REASSURANCES THAT "SOMEONE WOULD BE DESIGNATED" TO TAKE OVER, PROBABLY LABOR SECRETARY OJEDA, OR PERHAPS FOREIGN

RELATIONS. BUT THERE WAS EVIDENTLY NO SIGNIFICANT CONTACT OR DISCUSSION INSIDE THE GOM--ONLY HAND-WRINGING-- UNTIL THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 31, WHEN WE HEARD FROM THE PRESIDENT VIA ROEL THAT HE WOULD PREFER THAT THE TRIP TAKE PLACE IN A "MORE RELAXED ATMOSPHERE" THAN SEEMED POSSIBLE ON FEBRUARY 3-5. THIS WAS THE SUBJECT OF MEXICO 01788 SENT IMMEDIATE EARLY ON FEBRUARY 1.

7. MEANWHILE, FURTHER COMPLICATIONS OCCURRED. LOPEZ PORTILLO, WHO HAD AGREED FROM THE BEGINNING TO RECEIVE AG BELL AND PARTY ON THE EVENING OF FRIDAY FEBRUARY 3, UNDERTOOK A COMMITMENT TO SPEND THE DAY IN ZACATECAS. ALSO, THE PRESIDENT DECIDED THAT HIS CABINET SHOULD BE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MEXICO 02051

PRESENT AT A MEETING OF GOVERNORS IN QUERETARO ON FEBRUARY 4 AND 5 TO COMMEMORATE THE 51ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONSTITUTION. FOREIGN SECRETARY ROEL REVISED HIS COMMITMENT TO BE IN THE YUCATAN SO THAT HE COULD BE IN QUERETARO. OSCAR FLORES WAS OF COURSE LEFT FREE TO HOST ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL. BUT WITH FLORES' ILLNESS, THE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESS DISINTEGRATED. PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO'S OFFER TO FLY BACK FROM ZACATECAS TO MEXICO CITY TO KEEP HIS APPOINTMENT WITH AG BELL SHOULD BE READ IN THE LIGHT OF HIS STATEMENTS THAT HE WOULD PREFER "A MORE RELAXED ATMOSPHERE" AND THAT HE WANTED FLORES AS HOST--I.E., READ IN THE LIGHT OF A PRERERENCE FOR POSTPONEMENT.

8. TO SUM UP, IF FLORES HAD NOT FALLEN ILL, THE VISIT WOULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE. WE BELIEVE, THOUGH, THAT ITS

POSTPONEMENT WAS NOT UNWELCOME IN FOREIGN RELATIONS, LABOR, AND THE WORKING LEVEL OF THE PRESIDENCY, WHICH ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUBSTANTIVE SIDE OF THE UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS PROBLEM, TO WHICH THE MEXICAN ATTORNEY GENERAL'S TIES ARE TENUOUS (SEE PARA 5). THERE IS VERY CLEAR EVIDENCE, DETAILED BELOW, THAT THESE AGENCIES DO NOT YET HAVE THEIR POSITION IN ORDER.

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9. A WELL-PLACED SOURCE REPORTED THAT POSTPONEMENT RESULTED FROM "UNBELIEVABLE DISORGANIZATION" WITHIN GOM AND THAT GOM HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO AGREE ON WHAT POSITION IT SHOULD ADOPT RE UNDOCUMENTED WORKER PROBLEM AND U.S. ADMINISTRATION'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM. REFERRING TO JAN 29 ARTICLES BY EL SOL COLUMNIST MANUEL BUENDIA, SOURCE SAID THAT A POSITION PAPER CITED IN ARTICLES, PREPARED BY PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR'S OFFICE (ASESORIA) WAS DISCUSSED TWO DAYS AGO IN INTER-SECRETARIAL MEETING, APPARENTLY INVOLVING LABOR, FOREIGN RELATIONS AND ONE OTHER SECRETARIAT. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, PARTICIPANTS WERE UNABLE TO AGREE AND "DISAPPROVED" PAPER PRESENTED BY ASESORIA. QUESTION THEN AROSE AS TO WHAT GOM SHOULD DO. STRONGEST FACTION AT MEETING ADVOCATED GOM DOING NOTHING AT THIS TIME, WHEREAS MINORITY GROUP, WHICH URGED THAT GOM TAKE SOME POSITION, WAS DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES AS TO WHAT IT SHOULD BE. AT THIS POINT MEETING BROKE UP AND PARTICIPANTS FROM SECRETARIATS REPRESENTED RETURNED TO "THEIR OWN THING". IN SUM, SOURCE COMMENTED, GOM ONLY TWO DAYS PRIOR TO SCHEDULED BELL-MARSHALL VISIT WAS TOTALLY UNPREPARED TO PRESENT GOM POSITION. IN ADDITION, SOURCE STATED THAT FROM HIS OBSERVATION, GOM HAD NOT COORDINATED ITS ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATION AND ORGANIZATION FOR VISIT UNTIL 10 DAYS AGO. AG'S ILLNESS, SUBSEQUENT BUREAUCRATIC CONFUSION, AND BELATED RECOGNITION THAT KEY GOM OFFICIALS (I.E., FONSEC AND LABSEC) HAD PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS WHICH WOULD HAVE KEPT THEM OUT OF TOWN, ALL CONTRIBUTED TO ORGANIZATIONAL CHAOS. THIS FACT, TOGETHER WITH INABILITY TO DEVELOP GOM POSITION, WERE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS IN GOM DECISION TO RECOMMEND THAT VISIT BE POSTPONED. SOURCE SAW NO EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT GOM DECISION TO POSTPONE WAS INFLUENCED

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IN ANY WAY BY PRESS TREATMENT OF BERGLAND STATEMENT ON BRACERO PROGRAM OR PRESIDENT CARTER'S SUBSEQUENT DENIAL

THAT USG WAS INTERESTED IN REINITIATING BRACERO PROGRAM.
HE DID STATE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL DAYS AGO THAT BERGLAND
STATEMENT HAD TEMPORARILY REVIVED INTEREST OF SOME ELEMENTS
IN GOM FOR NEW BRACERO PROGRAM. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER
OR NOT QUESTION OF BRACERO PROGRAM WAS INCLUDED IN ASESORIA
PAPER DISCUSSED TWO DAYS AGO.

10. WASHINGTON AGENCIES MAY WELL WONDER WHY AGRICULTURE
SECRETARY BERGLAND VISIT WAS CARRIED OFF WITHOUT PROBLEM,
WHILE BELL GROUP VISIT WAS POSTPONED. AG SECRETARY
VISIT DISCUSSED BASICALLY NON-CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS
SUCH AS JOINT WORK ON CONTROLLING PESTS AND DISEASES,
WHILE AGENDA FOR BELL VISIT INCLUDED UNDOCUMENTEDS AND
NARCOTICS, WHICH NECESSITATED INTER-SECRETARIAL COORDIN-
ATION AND A POSITION. IN ADDITION, BELL VISIT REQUIRED
COOPERATION AT CABINET LEVEL, NEVER EASY TO ACHIEVE IN
MEXICO. AND, OF COURSE, SECRETARY BERGLAND'S
HOST REMAINED IN GOOD HEALTH THROUGHOUT. LUCEY

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